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ABSTRACT

The results of a study measuring the Central Life Interests (CLI) of public school teachers are presented. Elementary and secondary teachers responded to a questionnaire rating their attitudes as being job oriented, nonjob oriented, or as having no preference. Four subscales measured the attachment felt toward the informal social relations among teachers, general affective experiences, attitudes toward formal organization in the schools, and the technical aspects of their jobs. The CLI configuration of the teachers in this sample was found to differ from other occupational groups. The majority were found to be not job oriented in their overall central life interest orientations. (JD)

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Teachers' Attachment to Work

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The relationship between involvement in work and other facets of people's lives is an issue that has been raised several times in recent years with respect to the occupation of teaching (Dreeben, 1970; Lortie, 1975; Pellegrin, 1976). This relationship has been studied extensively in industrial and business settings by Robert Dubin (1956 & 1977), who theorizes that in modern industrial society social experience is inevitably segmented into a number of competing sectors. Family, church, community, and workplace all demand some degree of involvement from the individual, but it is likely that some of these sectors of social experience will be personally more important than others. Modern society is characterized as being comprised of multi-equal institutions among which the individual is able to select those in which greater self-investment will be made. This is in contrast to earlier societies in which a single institution or rigid hierarchy of institutions prevailed, allowing little if any choice for the individual.

An institution chosen by a person for greater self-investment becomes that individual's central life interest. Substantial emotional and intellectual involvement is evident in those institutional settings that are central to the individual. Commitment to the institution of central life interest means linking one's, "personal fate with it," and "making participation in it an end in itself (Dubin, 1977, p. 2)." The individual will engage in primary social relations, according to this theory, only in settings where personal value is placed on

social experience, that is, in settings which do in fact represent a central life interest.

Behavior in institutions that are non-central is perfectly compatible with social norms, but the level of self-investment in terms of emotion and affect is minimal. In those sectors where participation is necessary but not personally important to the individual, in other words, behavior will tend to be largely instrumental, adequate but not outstanding. Under these conditions the individual will become attached to only the most direct and obvious features of the situation such as security or power. Holding a job may thus simply demonstrate that some minimal level of adequate performance is being met which justifies continued employment.

In a series of studies conducted mainly in business and industry, Dubin and others (Dubin, Hedley, and Taveggia, 1976) have attempted to determine the extent to which the job and work setting are central life interests of workers. Findings suggest that in the occupations studied workers typically prefer social relationships outside the workplace. Community, friends, and family more often command the worker's central interests. The job most frequently serves as a necessary but relatively unimportant segment of personal experience. Adequate behavior allows the individual to survive without having to make any degree of commitment which might detract attention and investment of self from those other sectors of experience which are more highly valued.

The concept of central life interest has also been applied in two studies conducted among teachers. Nelson (1962) found that junior high school industrial education teachers did not typically view their occupation as a major central life interest. He was unable to relate job orientation, however, with any of the variables he selected including a second work role inventory and environmental factors. Bryan (1972) also concluded that the majority of high school teachers did not view work as a central life interest. Using a correlation analysis, however, it was shown that teachers who did view their work as a central life interest received higher ratings of effectiveness from their students on nine out of twelve questions. A positive relationship was also discovered between teachers' level of education and the extent to which they were job oriented. Also, higher percentages of men rather than women, and teachers from small towns rather than large towns viewed work as a central life interest.

The occupation of teaching has been described as one which requires little self-investment and which permits the pursuit of outside activities. Dreeben (1970) points out that certain characteristics of the occupation discourage lifetime commitment. Teaching has a truncated career line, for example, so opportunities and avenues for advancement are severely limited. Pay is based on seniority and academic credit rather than expertise or achievement, and little opportunity exists for inservice

development. Low pay encourages teachers to moonlight or seek other types of employment. Achieving advancement by entering administration or guidance, while allowing a teacher to remain in education, nevertheless means leaving the classroom. Dreeben also suggests that these factors may vary in their impact according to contingencies of the life cycle, and that commitment may be related to sex, length of tenure, training, relationships with superiors, and attitude of spouse.

Lortie (1975, pp. 82-108) suggests that career rewards in the teaching occupation are structured in such a way that instrumental participation rather than full commitment among teachers seems to develop. The absence of staged improvements in income, power, and status among teachers who persist, Lortie argues, means that there are no cycles of effort, attainment, and renewed ambition built into the system, and little identification with the occupation and its future. Furthermore, the absence of these staged improvements, it is argued, results in a weak relationship between effort and reward. Teachers eventually come to the realization that effort and talent are not rewarded and begin to adjust accordingly. In other words, persistance in teaching brings limited rewards and negatively affects people's self-investment in the job.

Because the incentives of a career in teaching fail to reward talent and effort, those who invest most of themselves, and those who persist are comparatively disadvantaged. Lortie speculates that a major result is a subtle depreciation of

classroom teaching as an acceptable status in itself. Marriage for women, and promotion to administration or avocational interests for men, apparently fill a gap in being "only" a teacher.

Pellegrin (1976) echoes Dreeben's and Lortie's observations that the lack of a hierarchy in teaching means that upward mobility through administrative work requires abandonment of the classroom, and that teaching requires less than lifetime commitment which allows individuals to explore alternative types of employment or to pursue non-work roles such as housewife or mother. Pellegrin adds that unlike other professional occupations, continuous employment as a teacher is not required to maintain one's qualifications. Characteristics of the teaching occupation, thus, not only make the development of interests outside the job a feasible possibility for teachers, but in some instances may actually reinforce such behavior. This seems particularly true for males and for all teachers who spend more than just a few years in the occupation.

Purpose:

This study seeks to further extend the concept and measurement of central life interest into the public schools and attempts to relate central life interest (CLI) orientation with demographic dimensions selected as having a possible relationship to life contingencies, ambition for advancement, and commitment to a teaching career.

Instrumentation:

Dubin (1956) has developed an instrument which is called the Central Life Interests (CLI) schedule for determining whether the workplace or some other setting is the central life interest of workers. This questionnaire is comprised of four subscales, each of which measures a possible source of attachment to work such as informal social relations, general satisfactions, formal organizational rewards, and technical aspects of the job.

The first subscale is labelled "informal" and refers to those group experiences, "involving small-talk, leisure-time behavior, friendship interactions, and affectional attachments (Dubin, 1956, p. 135)." The second subscale relates to "general" social experiences, and measures the emotional or affective impact of work, centering on those "activities giving pleasure, satisfaction, or general rewards, which may be pursued in varying places at varying times (p. 136)." Together, the "informal" and the "general" subscales provide an indication of the importance and value placed by the individual on the social experience and primary human relations encountered at the place of employment.

The third subscale on the CLI index is called the "formal" and deals with the respondent's relative attachment to organizational power, rules, and rewards. The fourth subscale, labelled "technical," centers on experiences "involving the relationship between an individual and his actual work operations ... technical aspects of his environment (Dubin, 1956, p. 138)." The "formal" and the "technical" subscales together describe the individual's degree of attachment to impersonal features of work and the workplace.

Teachers' central life interests were assessed using a slightly modified version of the Central Life Interest questionnaire developed by Dubin (1956). It was necessary to revise business and industry terms in several items to language more appropriate to the school and classroom. Each of 32 items on the CLI schedule describes a specific behavior and asks the individual to choose the setting or locale from among three alternatives in which he or she prefers to enact that behavior. Alternatives include a work setting, a setting away from work, and a no preference response. Respondents are then classified as being job oriented, non-job oriented, or as having no preference with regard to work as a central life interest according to their response pattern on the overall scale, as well as each of the four subscales. The CLI instrument has a split-half reliability of "around .90" (Dubin & Champoux, 1975). Data were analyzed by percentages and Chi-square tests where appropriate.

Sample:

The entire staff of a suburban school district in central New York State, 132 elementary, middle, and high school teachers, was asked to complete the CLI questionnaire. In addition, demographic information concerning age, marital status, number of years experience, certification and tenure status, enrollment in graduate courses and programs, involvement in professional activities, and intermittent employment in the teaching occupation was requested. One hundred and six usable questionnaires were obtained.

Results:

The percentage of teachers falling into each of the three CLI categories on the overall scale and each of the subscales is reported in Table I below. Note that the percentages for the overall scale and the subscales are calculated independently and that each is additive only within itself.

TABLE I

Proportions of Teachers' Expressions of CLI

	Job Oriented	No Preference	Non-Job Oriented
Overall CLI Score	10%	61%	29%
Informal Subscale	5%	34%	61%
General Subscale	19%	36%	45%
Formal Subscale	36%	48%	16%
Technical Subscale	51%	28%	21%

Overall CLI:

It is striking that only 10 percent of the teachers in this sample were classifiable as being job oriented with respect to their overall central life interests. This compares with Dubin's (1975) report that approximately 50 percent of American middle managers and approximately 20 percent of persons on the worker level in industry are job oriented. It is considerably less than Nelson's 24 percent (1962), and is consistent with Bryan's (1972) conclusion that the substantial majority of high school teachers studied were not job oriented. Considering the many characteristics of the teaching occupation which discourage full self-investment, this comparatively low job oriented response rate is not at all surprising. In fact, it can very easily be argued that those teachers who comprise the 61 percent no preference category represent a more realistic adjustment to the occupation's failure to reward directly effort and talent. Although attached to the occupation to some degree, the job does not represent a central life interest for this group. Twenty-nine percent of the teachers sampled, not by any means an insignificant proportion, have evidently selected an institution unrelated to their teaching as an arena in which to invest themselves more fully.

Informal Subscale:

Consideration of the subscales clarifies what some of the sources of attachment might be that are important to the teachers

studied. The "informal" subscale refers to group experiences, "involving small-talk, leisure behavior, friendship interactions, and affectional attachments (Dubin, 1956, p. 135)." On the "informal" subscale, while the 5 percent of teachers who were classified as being job oriented is comparable to the job oriented response on the total scale, the percentage of teachers classified as being non-job oriented rather than as having no preference is remarkably higher. A total of 61 percent of the teachers in the sample proved to be non-job oriented with regard to informal interactions on the job. Interestingly, Dubin (1956) provides similar figures for industrial workers. Given the commonly noted isolation from colleagues experienced by classroom teachers, the percentages represented on this subscale make sense. Evidently the teachers studied value informal social interactions off the job more highly than those encountered at school (Blumberg & DeSanctis, 1979).

General Subscale:

On the conceptually related subscale referring to "general" emotionally important social experiences, 19 percent of the teachers proved to be job oriented, and 45 percent non-job oriented. Obviously, the scores recorded in this sample for teachers on the "general" and "informal" subscales are associated to a certain degree. A possible interpretation of the slight discrepancy between them is that although isolated from colleagues, teachers can also derive satisfaction from interactions with students.

Unlike many other occupations, activities giving pleasure and satisfaction of a social nature can be derived from working closely with students. The emotional impact of teaching on teachers is well documented. Lortie (1975) emphasizes that only "psychic" rewards or personal satisfaction is related directly to individual effort in the teaching occupation. Consequently, these psychic rewards affect day-to-day behavior most strongly. Bolstered by cultural definitions of the "dedicated" teacher, it is psychic rewards derived from classroom events that Lortie found most teachers emphasize as important. One would almost have expected that the job oriented response rate on the "general" subscale would have been even higher than it actually proved to be.

Formal Subscale:

Among teachers in this study, 36 percent reported being job oriented on the "formal" scale. Dubin (1956) found that 61 percent of the industrial workers he studied were job oriented on this subscale which measures attachment to organizational power, rules, and rewards. More recent studies have almost always produced even higher results (Dubin, Hedley, & Taveggia, 1976). A possible explanation for the comparatively low job oriented response rate on this subscale is that schools are loosely structured as organizations (Bidwell, 1965), particularly with regard to such things as influence, rules, and outcomes (Weick, 1976). This speculation is given further credence when Lortie's (1975)observation is considered, that compared

to other professions it is virtually impossible for a teacher to substantially enhance his or her power, prestige, or income through personal effort on the job.

Technical Subscale:

Fifty-one percent of the respondents were rated as job oriented on the "technical" subscale. Dubin's (1956) original study rated 63 percent of industrial workers as job oriented on this subscale and, again, subsequent studies have reported even higher results among other occupational groups (Dubin, Hedley, & Taveggia, 1976). Compared to the other subscales in this study, however, the job oriented response rate on the "technical" scale is quite high, suggesting that teachers in this sample are relatively strongly attached to the actual task and operations of their job and work setting.

Demographics:

Overall central life interest orientation among teachers in this sample seems to be most strongly related to the factors of sex, grade level taught, and marital status. On the overall CLI scale, a difference was found between male and female teachers significant beyond the .02 level (X^2=8.67, df=2), with women teachers tending to be more job oriented and men teachers less job oriented than expected. This result is contrary to Bryan's (1972) finding among high school teachers, that males tend to locate their central life interest in work more often than females.

A difference significant beyond the .01 level (X^2=9.43, df=2) also appeared between elementary and high school teachers. Elementary teachers tended to be more job oriented and high school teachers less job oriented than expected. Given the fact that the vast majority of elementary teachers in the sample were female, a question that arose was whether sex, grade level, or a combination of the two factors accounted for these results.

When teachers were compared within and between the variables of sex and grade level, it was discovered that male high school teachers were the least job oriented group, while female elementary teachers proved to be the most job oriented. The difference between male high school teachers and female elementary teachers was significant beyond the .005 level (X^2=9.77, df=2). Also found was a difference significant beyond the .10 level (X^2=2.85, df=2) between female elementary and female high school teachers, with the former being slightly more job oriented than expected, and the latter being slightly less so. It appears, then, that sex and grade level both contribute to differences in overall central life interest orientation. Further tests, however, revealed no significant differences among other combinations of the sex and grade level variables.

When teachers were distinguished by marital status, it was found that married male teachers differed significantly from both married and single female teachers on the overall

CLI scale beyond the .025 level, (X^2=7.93, df=2) and (X^2=7.52, df=2) respectively. Single males, however, did not differ significantly from either group, nor did they differ from married males. Married high school teachers tended to be the least job oriented and married elementary teachers the most job oriented, the difference between the two significant beyond the .005 level (X^2=12.27, df=2). No difference was found, however, between single high school teachers and single elementary teachers with regard to their CLI orientations.

The group identified as most likely to be rated as job oriented in this study, then, proved to be married female elementary teachers. The group least likely to locate its central life interest in teaching, on the other hand, proved to be married male high school teachers. The small size of the sample, and particularly the small number of teachers falling into the job oriented category, unfortunately made it untenable to compare groups while controlling for more than one variable at a time.

Although not clearly conclusive, the number of years in current position differentiated males on the total CLI index at a level significant beyond the .09 level (X^2=6.49, df=3), and differentiated females on the "technical" subscale at a level significant beyond .06 (X^2=12.45, df=6). These results suggest that central life interest orientation may be related to a certain degree to contingencies of the life cycle which, considering the other findings, probably affect men and women, and married and single teachers differently.

With respect to the CLI subscales, marital status, certification status, and whether or not a teacher regularly read professional journals and magazines were factors identified as being related to teachers' attachment to impersonal features of the worksetting. It was discovered, for example, that fewer married teachers tended to be job oriented toward "formal" organizational power, rules, and rewards than their single counterparts at a level significant beyond .05 (X^2=6.25, df=2).

Permanent certification vs. temporary certification, which is also a measure of experience and graduate level training, differentiated teachers on the "technical" subscale, at a level significant beyond .05 (X^2=6.00, df=2). Teachers with temporary certification tended to be more job oriented than expected with regard to technical aspects of the job, while permanently certified teachers were slightly less job oriented in this regard.

A somewhat puzzling difference relating to the "technical" subscale was discovered, significant beyond the .06 level (X^2=5.90, df=2). Fewer teachers than expected who regularly read professional journals were rated as job oriented on the "technical" subscale. At the same time, more teachers than expected were rated as job oriented who did not read professional journals and magazines.

Having been engaged in other employment, or having left teaching to raise a family seems to affect a teacher's attachment to social relations encountered at school, making him or her somewhat less job oriented on the "general" and "informal" subscales. Teachers

who responded that they had never been employed full time in an occupation other than teaching differed from those who had been otherwise employed at a level significant beyond .05 (χ^2= 6.09, df=2), with those who had only worked as teachers being more job oriented on the "general" satisfactions scale than those who had held other jobs.

Teachers who had left teaching temporarily for the purpose of raising a family differed from those who had not left at a level significant beyond .03 (χ^2=7.55, df=2), the former being less job oriented on the "informal" scale than the latter, who had never left.

Conclusion:

This application of Dubin's Central Life Interest theory seems to support some of the conclusions presented by Dreeben (1970), Lortie (1975), and Pellegrin (1976) about the teaching occupation's failure to encourage high levels of self-investment among teachers. Most clearly, for the sample studied, the majority of teachers are not job oriented in terms of their overall central life interest orientations, a finding which is consistent with those of Nelson (1962) and Bryan (1972). As stated previously, this lack of work orientation among teachers is probably the most rational response to an occupation that fails to directly reward effort and talent.

Overall central life interest orientation is evidently related to a number of factors, including sex, grade level taught, marital status, and to a certain extent, number of

years in current position. These findings seem consistent with the observation (Dreeben, 1970; Lortie, 1975) that the reward structure and time schedule of teaching probably affect people differently at various times according to the life cycle contingencies they happen to be facing.

Attachments to social aspects of the job in this sample proved to be related to whether or not teaching had been a lifetime career of the respondents. Attachments to impersonal aspects of teaching were related to factors such as marital status, certification status, and the reading of professional journals and magazines.

On the whole, teachers in this sample proved to be less attached to informal social relations and general affective experiences encountered at work than to formal organizational and technical aspects. While consistent with central life interest theory, this finding is somewhat surprising when it is considered that the most direct, primary, and most salient rewards of teaching are intrinsic (Lortie, 1975), rather than derived from external sources.

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